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[For descriptions of mystery plays acted by the lamas of the old school, see 10: Waddell, AJ1 Tibet, pp. 521 et passim.]

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brother, whichever of them is in possession of the family property, (see under heading "Entail") must at this season invite all members of the family to assemble at his house for a five days' jollification. For dinner he must give them a pudding, just as we give a Christmas plum-pudding, and when this pudding is put on the table a hole is made in the centre, and into it butter is poured. 796 592

I am told by Dr. Marx of the Moravian Mission, to whom I am indebted for the above account, that this exactly corresponds with the custom still prevailing in Sweden, where butter or oil is poured into the Christmas plum-pudding. 171 796

In England we stick a sprig of holly into the pudding, but the idea is the same--the holly, being an ever green, is symbolical of life, while butter or oil is closely connected with the idea of light which again is closely connected with the idea of life.

During the "Lósir" the Ex-Raja of Ladák is allowed to assume regal dignities, as during the "Dosmóchey." The five days are spent in feasting, dancing, horse-racing and all kinds of merriment. 796 [648]

The "SHoophia" is a kind of harvest festival in honor of the "hla" or "goddess" of the "SHoops" or "ears of corn." It falls about the 7th of August, when the crops are just beginning to ripen. It is celebrated in every village. [241]

The "tsheySHoo" festival is observed in memory of a religious celebrity named "Oorjian Padma Jungnas" who lived in the early days of Tibetan Buddhism. It ought to be kept on the 10th day of every month, but as a "festival" it is as a matter of fact, observed by the people of the country, only once a year, when a great festival takes place at Heymis, the chief monastery of Ladák. This festival which is called the "Heymis TsheySHoo" falls on the 10th day of the 5th month, corresponding to about 7th of June. On the 2nd day of the festival the Heymis monastery is crowded with people who have come from all parts of Ladák, Zangskár, and Changtháng to witness the "devils" dance" performed by Lamas belonging to the Heymis monastery. The dancing of the monks though weird is rather stupid, but their masks are grotesque and their richly embroidered Chinese silk dresses are extremely handsome. 796 536

The Ladákis explain the object of the "devils' dance" by saying

796 536 that after death a man's spirit, on its way to the next world, is met by demons whose features resemble those portrayed on the masks, and that if a man has not in this world been rendered familiar with such monstrosities, he is likely to be frightened off the proper road.

796 787 The "MáSHo NaGHrang" takes place about February at the village of MaSHo. On the day of the festival, two Lámás, called "hlooiar" are stripped, and their bodies painted black--after which a devil's face is painted in red on their chests and backs. Other Lámás then surround them and read prayers and incantations, while more Lámás play musical instruments. After a time the "hlooiars" become possessed with devils and begin to shout and leap about and rush over the roofs of the houses of the village. When in this state of excitement they are believed to be endued with the power of prophecy, and they are consequently much consulted. After a time the "hlooiars" succumb to the excitement and fall down senseless, they are then taken away by the Lamas and the NaGHrang ceremony is at an end.

[45]

601 FILIAL--butsey-tsoks.

601 FIRST BORN--góboo.

778 FLAGSTAFF--tarchhen general term, gialtsan the round cylindric[sic] usually seen on the top of a monastery.

241 231 FLAIL--Not used in Ladák, where corn is trodden out by cattle.

[47]

651 FORCED LABOUR--beygár or thal or hala. The vicious system of beygár or "forced labour" which is to be found in most Oriental countries, prevails also in Ladák. Strictly speaking, the only persons liable to beygár are the holders of land, but as a matter of fact the Kashmir authorities do not observe this restriction very closely, and exact it from others than land-holders.

The word beygár is used to denote the unpaid labour exacted by the State from land-holders. Every village keeps a roster of men liable to beygar, and each in turn has to do, or arrange that some one else shall do on his behalf, such beygár as may be demanded.

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selected for either their youth or beauty. Other dances, such as the "pigeon" dance occur, in which both sexes join, though without touching each other as in the West, and the "shoulder" dance of women only, in which movement of the shoulder are prominent. In the *shondros*, also a woman's dance, the partners face each other, then wheel round till they come back to back, afterwards slowly reversing again till they face once more. At the end of the horse-racing in the New Year, a dance occurs in the middle of the bazar in which the women stand in a circle, and the men dance round them in pursuance of an old custom connected with royalty. A dance for both sexes, called the "peacock dance," has its song about that bird. Otherwise the Ladaki dancing differs from that of Tibet, which is said to be always accompanied by singing.

It has now become practically an annual event for the Wazir to have a display in honour of the British Joint Commissioner, at which other dances and plays are seen, and the stage properties of Leh obtain their yearly airing. To this *ltadmo* any Europeans who happen to be in Leh at the time are hospitably invited. The programme usually begins in the afternoon between two and three o'clock, when it is opened with some sort of prayer for His Imperial Majesty and H.H. the Maharajah of Kashmir. The former may take the form of "God Save the King" sung by the Boys' School in English with their own peculiar accent. The boys of the State School then act a little play, more or less in costume, and always with a very powerfully pointed moral; and, of late, a demonstration of Boy Scouts of both State and Mission Schools has become a feature of the programme. This may be followed by a lama dance in devil-masks, and tea is usually served between four and five p.m. For this the *élite* withdraw from the covered balcony, from which they have been watching the performance, to tents or a simple pagoda in the Wazir's pleasant garden behind. The Europeans have one tent, the

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527 King and a *Skushog*, if present, and one or two Leh Buddhists
● 536 of high rank, another, Hindu and Mussulman officials have their separate resorts, and any other slightly less prominent townsmen or traders have their own places. The Europeans are provided with an English tea, for which, with good luck, the butter in the cakes is not too strong. After this refreshment they may adjourn to the adjoining polo ground to watch a match there.

The hours from six to eight are usually labelled "rest" on the programme, and we return from our homes to dine in the Wazir's house at eight. The number of Sahibs in Leh entertained thus lavishly, once reached seventeen, and the record number of courses at such a dinner was fifteen, but, on this occasion we were also celebrating the birth of a son to the Wazir, while the previous year, during the Great War, we had met to commemorate the British conquest of German West Africa. At one of these feasts our host was a Mussulman, who partook with us; so also a small son of his endeavoured to do, but there were many courses, and the day had already been so long and exciting, that the little fellow could not manage to keep awake. He would sit up for one or two courses, then, having fallen asleep, be removed to return after one or two more, and so food and sleep alternated with him throughout the meal. The elaborate menu of these meals is usually presided over by a Ladaki quite expert in Western cooking. After a short smoke we all return to the covered balcony, to find a large bonfire kindled on the open space in front of us, on which kerosene oil, so costly by the time it reaches Leh, is recklessly thrown at intervals, or when a special flare of illumination is required. The weird performances we are going to see are rendered far more effective by its flickering light, which also plays on the quaint brown faces of the spectators, packed closely together on the other three sides of the square, some sitting on the ground in front, others standing behind, women in blue turquoised *perags* and black

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earflaps, men and children in their turned-up caps, dotted about with Mussulmans in turbans, old and young all eager and expectant, for they love a *ltadmo*.

One of our annual friends opens the programme, a man on stilts concealed by long draperies, not very realistic, but a source of great delight to the child-like audience. He is followed by two large birds, with long necks (held up by an arm of the masquerader within) and vulture-like heads and beaks, the bodies covered with sheepskins. These extraordinary animals, programmed as "chicken," hop about, peck at each other, clean their feathers, and attend to their personal *shikar*, each action provoking a fresh outburst of amusement from the crowd.

Next comes a lion dance, in which two men are covered with a large skin, from which their human booted legs protrude as fore and hind legs in the most unabashed fashion. The face consists of a mask, and its attendants introduce it with antics of their own. The unwieldly lion makes grotesque leaps and bounds, and finally climbs up on to a table. The play was brought to Leh from Chinese Turkestan, where several tables are piled up high, and our nimble lion reaches the topmost. In Leh, however, a far more serious *dénouement* is achieved, for, with a series of rolls and contortions, a baby lion is born, to the unbounded delight of the audience, and suddenly appears on the table with its mother (the cub being a child also dressed in a skin). Waddell says that the play of this acrobatic lion was primarily derived from China, and has its origin in the "mythical lion of the Himalayan snows, which is believed to confer fortune on the country where it resides. One of these lions was enticed to China by a wizard, and the crops and cattle prospered as long as it lived, and when it died the Chinese stripped off its skin with which they conduct this dance."

Next comes a dragon dance, also originating from China, where the dragon is deified. It is supposed to follow after a

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177 man holding a ruby, which it wishes to devour. It is formed
527 by a masked leader, from whom long coloured strips of thin
536 cloth pass backwards over other men, who hold up lighted Chinese lanterns on sticks inside it, all their feet representing the dragon's legs. It certainly looks fantastic enough, with its illuminated sinuous snake-like outline darting to and fro in the darkness.

These plays are varied with dances, such as a torch dance, of Indian origin, in which a bare-footed man rushes about twirling a long torch lighted at each end, getting more and more furious as the burning ends approach his body, and the drums beat faster. Of sword dances there are two or three varieties; a slow quiet rhythmical one by a Balti with one sword only; one by a Pathan, lithe and rapid, with a sword in each hand; another slower one, when a Ladaki wields two swords, while in a fourth, two Pathan dancers, each with sword and shield, approach from opposite corners, and engage in mock fight.
174 This dance has come down from old Ladaki times, when our
536 peaceful Tibetans here more resembled their Pathan neighbours, and were probably more fierce and warlike in their mountain fastnesses.

527 Another amusing scene which is usually played on these
536 occasions is the representation of a Kashmiri pundit, who is a settlement officer, and goes round the countryside measuring fields and assessing taxes. He and his underlings are caricatured with floured faces, and good humoured fun made of their bribing methods.

But, perhaps the masterpiece and certainly the most amusing item of the show comes on towards the end, called "The Amban and the Boat." The Amban is a Chinese official on tour, who enters the scene of operations with his staff, and engages in his judicial duties. Then a messenger arrives and presents him with a red paper, informing him that his wife is coming to meet him. The lady is seen in the distance advancing towards her lord in a rickety boat over a rough

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sea. The boat is cleverly made with a framework of wood and paper from which a cloth valance depends. In the middle a small curtained canopy is erected, through which the lady's head can be dimly discerned, but her manly legs can be seen beneath as her impersonator works the boat, walking sideways here and there, and making the light craft rock and sway and gyrate violently as though in a heavy sea. An attendant guide or guardian and a boatman with an oar both accompany the lady, but outside the boat, so that the manipulations of the external oar add to the ludicrous effect produced, which in the bonfire light is grotesquely realistic and extraordinarily funny. As the boat approaches the Amban, the boatman makes a grave error in his nautical activities, and the boat with its precious occupant totters dizzily down to stillness. However it is not sunk to the depths of the ocean, for, after the Amban has manifested his anger and the boatman received a beating, the gay craft rises and once more rocks and sways, and, encountering boisterous seas, again vanishes into the distance, leaving the European element of the audience at least struggling between laughter and memories of *mal-de-mer*.

This little drama and that of the lion and dragon were brought to Leh by traders and servants of sahibs who travelled to Yarkand. "The Amban and the Boat" so impressed one of the latter when he saw it at Kashgar, that he introduced it into Leh for the first time as a fit entertainment for the wedding festivities of a friend, who, we hope, did not have to send for his bride across such perilous seas.

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CHAPTER XXIII

Introduction to the Hemis Mystery Play

A DESCRIPTION of life in Ladak could not be complete without an account of one of the great annual festivals held in the monasteries in the valley, such as the *Gustor* (the offering on the ninth) at Trigtse and at Spitug, or the *Ghanggoni Thsedrup* (the fulfilment of life on the blue hill) at Peang, all of which take place in the winter, whilst the *Thseshu* is held at Hemis in the summer. The last is the most important, its chief feature being the presentation of the famous so-called "mystery play." The festival, as its name indicates, is held on the tenth day of the fifth Buddhist month, which is the birthday of Padma Sambhava, the founder of Lamaism, and still the presiding genius of the red sect. According to records in Sikkim, he was a magician who came north in the seventh century, and convinced the lamas of Tibet that he was sent as an incarnation of the Buddha. But into the pure Buddhism, he introduces the old *Bon Chos* with its devil-worship, and encouraged the most sensual practices, also the eating of meat and drinking of wine, asserting that over-indulgence in all these passions would lead to a state of high trance. Strangely enough, when we were waiting in the ante-room on a visit to the *Skushog*, this sentiment was exactly borne out by a Ladaki, who was participating in the native beer and already in rather an expansive mood. To our remark that it was not right to get drunk and lose control of mind and body, he replied that it was good, for the soul then became happy and blessed.

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THE HEMIS FESTIVAL.

The dance of deities at the Hemis festival, showing the chief god descending the steps under his canopy, while those who precede him in the procession have already begun to dance.

THE "MYSTERY PLAY."

Spectators watching the "Mystery Play" at Hemis. The balcony with the curtain across it conceals the purdah lady guests of the monastery, such as the Hindu and Mahommedan wives of the down country officials at Leh.

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baby antics, mimicry of the dancers, and enjoyment of the tamasha, till finally we met his diminutive Holiness being carried off in his lama's arms down the steps to bed, still full of beans, and turning from a blessing he was instructed to give to a bowing worshipper to look back at the strange MemSahib, and lift his hand to his forehead saying "zhu" to her.

Now we must turn our attention to the ceremonies and first endeavour to present their strangely fascinating setting. The European visitors are asked kindly to bring their own chairs, which are placed in a row on a covered balcony one storey above the court-yard and facing the main buildings of the monastery. These are four storeys high, the upper ones having a series of verandahs, each adorned across the top with a valance, in which the *élite* of the country sit. One of the upper ones belongs to the *Skushog's* own private rooms, and only himself, the old ex-King, who is now leading a priestly life as a hermit in a neighbouring nullah, and one or two high-born gentlemen appear in it. A large cloth is hung over it, so that their privacy may be maintained when desirable, but, during the performances, the old King is seen in full view, while the dark-blue spectacled eyes and clean-shaven and shorn face and head of the *Skushog* frequently appear under a raised corner. In the adjacent anterooms sit other honoured guests, while the lower storey balconies seem reserved for ladies, for many widely-turquoised *perags* are seen from time to time. Placed on the roof at intervals are sticks supporting yak's tails, three-skirted umbrella-like structures, and others made of yak's wool. At the left-hand corner of the court-yard a wide flight of nine steps leads up to the main door on the first storey, and this throughout provides a centre of unceasing fascination. Not only do the actors enter and depart up and down these steps, but the whole time they are peopled by lamas ascending and descending, sitting and standing, a most wonderful kaleidoscope of red, the extraordinary thing being,

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that, in spite of every shade of that colour, scarlet, maroon, crimson, puce, claret, magenta, prune, in every stage of newness and fadedness being present, the total effect of what would ordinarily seem so clashing was a really artistic blend of colour, to which the eye constantly reverted.

To the right of the steps and at the level of the big doors, a platform projected from the main building, which accommodated a large number of spectators, and on the right-hand side of the courtyard were more steps and low roofs packed with onlookers. Another platform covered a roof which was entirely occupied by a gigantic prayer-wheel, so huge and heavy that two or three people must press against it with all their strength to start it revolving; but then what a mighty weight of prayer went round with each turn. Under the Westerners' balcony was the ecclesiastical band, the instruments being four pairs of cymbals and a dozen drums of the warming-pan shape with queer hooked beaters. Next to the musicians came the *Skushog's* throne, a raised platform with richly-cushioned seat and back, also long trappings, its high arch terminating the balcony above, while in front was placed a finely painted Tibetan table, flanked by vases of flowers. On the other side, level with the court-yard, were the remainder of the band, the two long shawms and the two flageolets or trumpets. In front of all the musicians were small tables which accommodated the holy books from which they chanted.

On the fourth and left side of the court-yard there was no wall, but a slight projection accommodated a large prayer-wheel about four feet high and three feet in diameter, which was constantly being set in motion during the waiting times. Beyond this was an open space prolonging the old quadrangle into another court-yard in front of the newer monastic buildings.

Between these two court-yards rough barriers, such as the trunk of a poplar or a piece of carved wood moulding from

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some destroyed roofing, were placed to complete the square of the dancing theatre. The audience squatting on the ground were pushed back behind these as each scene opened.

[788] In the middle of the main court-yard, some distance apart from each other, and supported by round whitewashed mud platforms were two flagstaffs, capped by yaks' tails ; they were almost as high as the monastery, and from their sides floated out many long prayer-flags. The scene was completed on the first morning, after we had been sent for and had taken our seats, by the setting-up of a large banner, which was let down from the roof above the main door and steps, on which was portrayed a young man with the Buddha type of face. This we learnt represented " Padma Karpo " his real name being " Dugpa Rinpoche." The next morning he was replaced by a more elderly gentleman, called " Galsas Rinpoche," the tutelary god of Hemis. Once in twelve years a still more important deity is displayed, and rites and ceremonies are performed in his honour, while the common people prostrate themselves before him. Above these banners each day a large awning with a yellow silk valance was protruded, whether to shade them from the sun subjectively, or objectively as regards the colour of the cloth, it is hard to say.

But before the drama opens, we must devote a few words to our fellow spectators who will provide us with so much interest and amusement in the long intervals between the scenes. During one of the most tedious of these, when we could hear the drums throbbing for some ceremony within the monastery, a Ladaki informant alleged that the monks had been receiving and eating the offerings of food brought by the common people from near and far. Judging by the size of the congregation this must needs have been a proponled ritual and a sustining meal.

During the acting they crowded on to every available space, roofs, balconies, galleries, steps, platforms, and blocked up all the egresses on the ground floor. Here and there were

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CHAPTER XXIV

Hemis Mystery Play—First Day

WITH this *mise-en-scène*, we must now try to convey some impression of the actual mystery play as performed at Hemis, and witnessed by us on two occasions at an interval of nine years. On the former of these the first dance was led off by the *Skushog* himself. His robes were very much like those of the other participants, but more ornate with many jewels, and he was distinguished by an overdress depending from the waist nearly to the bottom of his skirts, made of human bones connected into an interlacing pattern of real beauty. His mouth was covered with a thin white cloth, and an old lama with bare head and wispy grey locks, like a benign old wizard, went round at his side, and constantly wiped the perspiration from his face. This particular year was one of more elaborate ceremony, which only occurs every twelve years, including, as already mentioned, the display and worship of a particularly holy banner.

But at the performance we saw nine years later, the *Skushog* only occupied his throne in the court-yard for the first dance, and then retreated to his private apartments, from the balcony of which he watched the play. His entrance was an imposing ceremony attended by two ordinary lamas, and two wearing extraordinary hats with large, scolloped, turned-up edges culminating in a peak in front. Over him was held a large umbrella with gay skirts, and he was led, amid blare of trumpets and clash of cymbals, to take his seat on the throne

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796 facing the main building, where his attendants prostrated
536 themselves, and then retreated.

Two heralds then appeared on the roof in picturesque costumes : young lama boys with bare legs, short garments of the prevailing red, and yellow hats with turned-up brims. Their typical heraldic conches, from which depended banners decorated with dragons, now produced a very mournful sound, the great shawms of the band blew loudly their Wagnerian-like dragon music, and two masked figures appeared and ran down the steps. These were bare-legged, with short skirts of a pattern resembling an old chintz, hats with a low central peak and a round rolled brim to which a square piece of cheap red stuff was attached behind. Their right arms were sleeveless, and they carried the ordinary horsewhips of the country, a thong of leather on a short stick. These gentlemen combined the functions of police and jester throughout the ensuing ceremonies. They kept the crowds back, whipping even the ladies soundly, but harmlessly, with strong whacks on their sheepskin capes, and providing endless buffoonery to while away the tedium of the long intervals. Onlookers who passed to and fro across the open space were seen off with absurd gestures, or their gait grossly imitated as they unconsciously walked ahead. Small children were abstracted and nursed as babies, *pice* (the Indian farthing) were begged for with ludicrous entreaties, and all sorts of by-play indulged in to the huge delight of the audience. The favourite joke, which never palled, was to snatch off the hat of a casual passer-by, search it for undesirable inhabitants, pounce upon one in triumph, then throw away the cap in disgust. After they had executed a short dance, they at once began their policing operations by driving the crowds back with their whips, and entertaining them through an interlude of monotonous chanting by the musicians.

Then at last the real business began, the motive under-

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lying the whole thing apparently being the propitiation of evil deities and demon kings, and the exorcism of bad spirits in order to secure safety and good fortune during the coming year, and, additionally, to exploit ancient stories and superstitions in order to increase the merit and glorification of the lamas themselves, thus enhancing their sacerdotal powers. The common people also must become familiarized with the demons which will beset their spirits after leaving the body at death.

With a fanfare from the band, thirteen dancers were ushered on to the scenes, possibly the number having some relation to the thirteen ages represented by the thirteen red rings on the superstructure of the *chortens*. They were preceded by two ordinary lamas, and two with braziers of incense and with heraldic hats and gowns, who subsequently retreated. The dancers themselves wore enormous hats, with wide round brims having rounded edges, and a tall structure about one-and-a-half foot high rising from the crown, with a picture of a skull on it. From the backs of these hats a number of brightly coloured broad ribbons streamed down to well below the waist, smaller ones being attached to the front. Over their mouths were thin white cloths which the *Skushog* informed us were to keep out the dust raised by the dancing, a desirable custom which only obtained at Hemis. In each hand was a stick to which more streamers were attached. Their robes were of rich Chinese silk and brocade embroidered in most beautiful combinations of colour. Over their shoulders fell rich capes with deep, wide scollops, and in front they wore aprons, both of the same beautifully-patterned material, differing in each individual case. The skull in the hat, and another one represented at the waist in front were constant reminders that this life is an illusion in which mortality reigns, just as at our own ancient feasts a skeleton was brought in to remind the guests of the passing nature of this

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Stretching out right and left arms alternately, advancing and retiring to and from each other and the centre of the circle, they slowly made their way round the court-yard in the direction of the hands of a clock. The dance was slow and stately, accompanied by the beat of drums and monotonous chanting, occasionally punctuated by cymbals. A curious effect contrasting with this measured solemnity was frequently produced by the cymbals making two or three loud crashes succeeded by a series combining *diminuendo* and *accelerando*, exactly imitated by the dancers raising their heels in time to the music and, as it were, settling down on to them. Each dancer was given a few pieces of sacred herb by a lama, and as they slowly neared the steps, two monks, one standing each side at the top, with heraldic hats and trumpets, blew a note at which sign the two leaders made their exit up the steps between the onlooking lamas. This was repeated for each pair of dancers as they neared the stairs, and was the signal for retirement in successive pairs throughout the play. The whole impression of this dance was introductory ; by incantation and movement to prepare the "astral light" for the mystery play, and by invocation to bring blessing on the performers.

At its close one of the police-jesters ran round the court-yard with a censer of burning embers for further purification, and a continued incantation was maintained by the musicians to sustain the "aura" produced, and keep away bad spirits.

Now, with much crashing and noise from the band, a troop of sixteen dancers emerged, each carrying a tambourine and bell. Their hats were of plaited straw with a flat sign on the top shaped like the eye of a peacock's feather, and five of these patterns were arranged round the front of the head-dress. Their faces were partly hidden by a sort of visor of brass, with expansions representing the nose and moustache, and large spaces for eyes and mouth. These danced in a similar way to their predecessors, droning, ringing bells, and rattling little

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drums, the latter shaped like a double tambourine, each with a bob on the end of a long string, which knocked the successive sides of the drums when rattled sufficiently. These performers receded in pairs in the usual manner, and all we could make of their dance was a further preparation by sound vibrations to frighten away evil influences. These noises are more potent if the metal which causes the vibrations is holy.

After a prolonged interlude, the band rises and stands outside the shelter of the gallery to greet a long procession of maskers, which slowly files down the steps. Meanwhile some rich strips of carpets have been placed on benches to the right of the court-yard, and another long strip on the ground to the left. First comes an ordinary lama carrying a flag, next one with a brass pot, its brim drawn out into a long spout and set with jewels, then a pair of lamas swinging censers, others carrying shawms with queer expanded ends, some with shorter trumpets, and then a series of masked figures, which come on so quickly and amidst such clatter and noise that it is impossible to distinguish forms and sounds until they have arranged themselves. Most prominent of all is a high umbrella-like canopy of red and yellow which is carried by a Chinese-looking individual with short black coat and long Chinese gown, wearing a hat of several embroidered sections, such as Tibetans use upside down under their head-gears for an eyeshade when travelling. He and another attendant hold the umbrella over a tall form clad in rich embroidered silk, the face hidden behind a huge mask portraying a benign countenance with converging eyes. Accompanying this being are seven other deities and two devil-masked persons. Of the other figures in the procession sixteen are dressed alike, unmasked, but with peculiar hats made of a triple crown of decreasing size, the topmost surmounted by a round knob. As all the figures proceed, acolytes swinging censers pass in and out between them, and

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they gradually become distinguishable, the benign-faced gentleman under the umbrella taking his seat in the centre of the carpetted benches, with three of the deities on each side and a demon king sitting at each end. These two latter seemed to be guardians of the gods, who partake sufficiently of the nature of the demons from which these deities must be protected to be able to repulse them ; in other words, " Set a thief to catch a thief." They represent, according to Waddell, those deities of the old devil-worship religion, who, when Buddhism absorbed the latter, were forced to become *fidei defensores* of the new religion. Each of these demon kings has a third eye in his forehead, indicating that he can see on inner occult planes, the third eye showing that all things are known to him in all directions. The sixteen unmasked performers in turn move over to the carpet on the ground to our left, and sit there facing the deities, so that now we can sort out the minor personages. Attached to each row of sitters is a guardian with a cloth folded like a fan in his hand and wearing an ugly pink mask with a dropped gaping jaw which he can move up and down by means of his own chin. He walks along the front of his allotted row of figures fanning away evil influences, and every now and then has to divert his attention to ward off two apparently harmless imps wearing ugly masks, clad in yellow, each with a scarf and stick in his hands, and representing mischievous powers which try to intrude on the gathering. There also rushes in with shrill whistling, produced by placing the fingers in the mouth, four bare-legged short-skirted figures with three-cornered flags in their hats, whose capes are too scant to reach their bare waists. They seem to be high winds bringing messages from the four quarters, and each carries a *dorjhe* and tambourine-rattle. They do not seem to disturb the assembly for the guardian's fan is unperturbed, but the police-jesters have amusing encounters with them. We can now see also the other figures behind the seven seated deities, where

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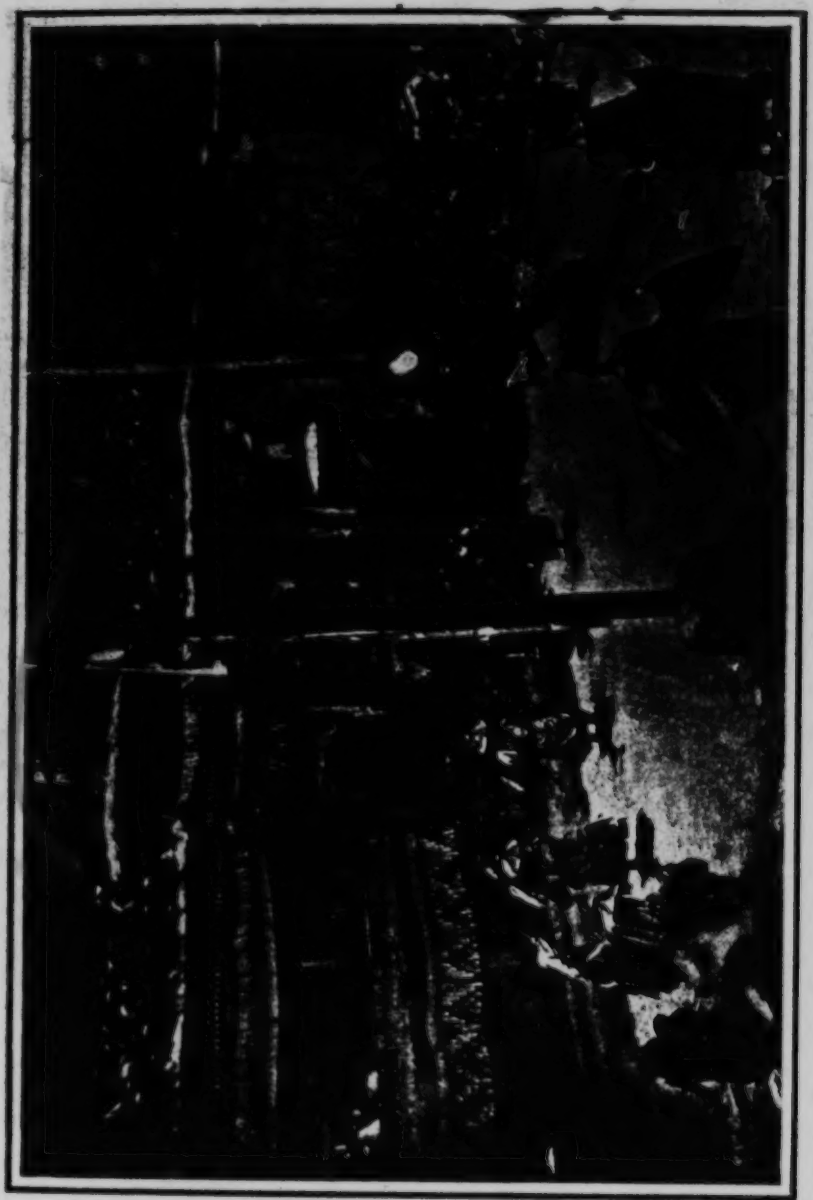

THE INAUGURAL DANCE OF THE HEMIS FESTIVAL.
On the left is the balcony from which the Europeans watch the performance; next to it is the Skushog's throne.

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13: Heber and Heber D-3 (1914-25) 1926 AJ4 W. Tibetans AJ4

796 the Chinese-looking and other attendant still hold the umbrella,
536 and sundry acolytes or lama boys stand at one end of the row ; one, a young novice, holds a small dough model of the organ of generation on a plate, whilst next to him another boy exhibits a large shell, and behind them stands a terribly dissipated-looking individual, masked with repulsive swollen cheeks.

There now enter four boys with warming-pan drums and hooked beaters, wearing hats of the inverted eyeshade type, like the Chinaman's, but with a large *Om* inscribed in the centre. These approach the deities, dancing, whilst the two imps of mischief try to get into the foreground, too. The boys range themselves in front, stop beating their drums and chant an incantation to which the Central Incarnation occasionally nods in assent, whilst the jesters and imps play about in the background of this solemn scene. These four boys having retired, the lesser deities rise in turn to execute a "pas seul," during which we can examine them more closely. In the centre we note that the chief personage, with the large passive face, holds in his right hand the *dorjhe* or thunderbolt, a symbol of great power, and a small bowl of corn—the first food given to man—in his left. He does not dance, but, beginning with the one on his right, the others rise alternately from each side of him. All are dressed in richest silk of most fascinating colours and embroidered with Chinese designs of dragons and skulls. Occasionally the jester goes round the scene with a censer, and the band of course continues to accompany the dancers.

The first of these has a mask with a blue face, a hat of three balls decreasing in size, one on top of the other, and carries a *dorjhe* and bell in his hands. At the close of his dance, the figure on the left of the chief god steps out—a deity with an insignificant small Buddha-like mask under a hat like a large stiffened lama's cap—who has to be fanned as he rises, and whose empty right hand placed against his chest is very

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796 tremulous as he executes his steps, whether voluntarily or not,
● 536 is not evident, though it ceases when he resumes his seat. From the right side of the first dancer rises a figure with a grey hat, resembling a *chorten*, bearing a wreath round it, surmounting a flesh coloured face, and, depending by long threads from his ears representations of the eye of a peacock's feather. He carries a tambourine in one hand and a bowl in the other, probably made of part of a human skull. His dance is more spreading and cumbrous than that of the others. Next comes into the arena the god next but one to the left of the head deity, one with a red face, carrying a shield and tambourine-rattle adorned with many of the peacock-feather symbols. Another red face follows from the other end of the row with the same ornament and several small skulls on his head-dress. In his left hand he carries herbs and a disc ; in his right is a spear with streamers attached to the handle. The final lesser deity arises from the left end of the row, displaying an orange face and a blue head with tiny knobs all over it, crowned by a chignon of the same, the traditional head of the Mongolian Buddha.

Depending from the back of this head is a square of beautifully embroidered silk, from which one's glance falls to the hands to see them covered with dark yellow gloves, too long in the fingers and full of holes ! How one would like to be initiated into the meaning of all this strange symbolism which seems so incongruous to Western eyes. Waddell suggests that the chief deity is Padma Sambhava, the remainder being his other seven forms, but that sometimes he is said to be the Buddha himself, the group being that of the seven Buddhas. Or does it symbolize the seven principles of human nature, seven being the sum of four and three, and the basic number of the present period according to Buddhist philosophy. Hence, for instance, the seven notes of the musical scale, and the seven colours of the rainbow have their significance. (*See* Chapter XVI.)

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But the two demon kings have yet to take their parts. First the one on the right of the presiding deity rises for his dance, and, suddenly, with blare of trumpets, two more devils appear, also with the third eye, and wearing handsome dresses combining light saxe-blue and red in their magnificent colour scheme. Similarly when the turn of the other demon king, with his black woolly head, begins, another pair emerges to dance with him, also gowned exquisitely. This suggests the sudden increase of dancers at the witches' sabbath in Western mediæval magic. Finally, the sixteen unmasked figures arise from their carpets and approach the deities, and then with slow stately steps all proceed round the court-yard, and retire up the stairs into the porch. Thus after about two hours ended the first morning's performance, and we retired for lunch.

The first event of the afternoon was essentially a devil-dance, in which twelve masqueraders appeared either singly or in couples, each advent signalized by the picturesquely-hatted lama in the porch blowing his trumpet. The first couple were bestial with repulsive snouts, third eyes, and wearing aprons with skulls on them. Executing a few turns, they settled down to rest in time with the cymbals in the manner already described. Next to them came a black mask under a black wooden hat with a triangular flag projecting from the middle, the wearer carrying a big hammer with a *dorjhe* attached. Number four had horns and a black animal visage, while his neighbour's head-dress had a broad foundation with small skulls rimming the front, and piled all over it long coils representing a mixture of intestines and snakes, an end of one of the latter appearing over the front, showing its head, symbolic of desire and decay. The next-comer wore a hat with a chaplet of skulls round a woolly crown, and carried a sabre and a piece of wood like a knife-cleaning board. Three flags protruding from a turret-like structure decked the next head, then came another mask with five skulls over

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the top, while the next element represented must have been a good one, for the figure wore a beatific though inane-looking white-faced mask. This bright spot among the other black-faced, repulsive monsters, however, was more than set off by the next comer, whose black mask had a most appalling gape, while the rear was brought up by two monkeys with dropped jaws and bulging upper eyelids. Save for the last fur-covered representatives of the Hanuman tribe, these hideous beings all of whom had the third eye, wore most exquisite gowns and aprons of Chinese silk. Their purport was not revealed to us, for, after a dance of the usual type and a low chant, they retreated, as usual in twos at a signal from the trumpeters in the porch.

The next act of this extraordinary drama was preceded by the placing of two small carpets on the ground near the left-hand flagstaff. One was square with a broad red border having in its centre a smaller square of tigerskin. The other was of dark blue, with an inner line of light blue demarcating a central white triangle, on which lay a mysterious object covered with a bit of thin dark blue veiling. The square with its four sides, the number of which indicates this earthly plane, and the triangle, which, by its three sides stands for the higher elements, thus represented the whole universe of earth and heaven. Two unmasked lamas brought out beer in a brass chalice, in shape rather like a Western coffee-pot, with rounded lines and a pattern chased in the middle of both sides ; also a small plate of barley and a cup. A third lama in an expansive yellow silk robe stood on the square facing the triangle, holding a bell and a *dorjhe* with streamers attached. The cup is given into his right hand, and to the sound of solemn chanting some beer is poured into it from the chalice. With more incantations he throws this away in the direction of the flagstaff. Into the cup, apparently reversed, some rice is then placed by the other lama, and that is also thrown away to the accompaniment of low chanting.

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Next beer and barley are both placed in the cup, the ringing of the bell punctuating the droning song as this is done; these are poured away also, and this libation repeated twice, after which chalice, cup, and platter are all taken away. The yellow-robed priest then dons his mitred hat, waves his streamered *dorjhe* three times towards the hidden object, and retires.

Two ghouls now appear on each side of the court, their heads and bodies covered with skeletal white cloth on which skulls and ribs are inadequately depicted by red streaks. Round their waists are kilts made of silk scarves, and attached to waist and ankles small bells like those on a jester's hat. Two of them carry skulls on sticks, and all wear decrepit white gloves on hands and feet, which have never known a "stitch in time," nor ever will. The compartments for the toes are particularly incapable of retaining contents and flap absurdly over their respective digits. These ghouls execute a dance reminiscent of our Sir Roger de Coverley, advancing to meet in the middle then passing over to opposite sides. One snatches the veil from the hidden object, revealing an anthropomorphic effigy of dough; the lama replaces the veil at once, but again they approach and remove it, before making their exit with dancing.

There now enter four figures of the ogre type, with the third eye in their foreheads. One has an open mouth and protruding tongue curled upwards, another has a chaplet of skulls on his head-dress, while a third is an ogress with long trails of hair. Each holds a weapon with which to combat evil spirits: thus number one carries a sickle to pierce the heart, number two a charm to bind the body, number three a snare of rope to tie the hands, and number four a bell, whose tinkling will keep the spirits down. They are joined by ghouls in narrow trousers and tunics with ill-fitting toe-gloves, and all dance, finally leaving the arena together.

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796 Now another procession files down the steps, preceded by
● 636 the bearer of the jewel-rimmed, long-spouted beer-pot, the two lamas with musicians' hats swinging censers, and two more whose hats have scolloped up-turned brims, blowing their flageolets, all of whom move to one side when they have ushered in their ogre. He is a true King of Demons, with his big devil-mask, up-turned tongue between great tusks, and three eyes. For him a lama holds out the plate of barley, some of which he flings away four times, some to each of the four quarters of the earth. The remainder is placed by the uncovered effigy, which is left alone for a time. The heraldic five lamas leave the scene, and the Demon King advances in a slow dance to the music of flageolets, while four other demons emerge to join him, all with streamers in their hands, coloured rags covering the backs of their heads, and long earrings of the peacock-eye type ; all, too, have small skulls in their head-dresses, and a papier-maché one at the waist. A lama removes the platter of barley, then the Demon King approaches the dough figure and chops it up with his sabre, whereupon the lama distributes it to him and his four satellites, afterwards retreating to a low chant.

Again another type of demon comes upon the scenes dancing, and is joined by four others, one pair emerging from the crowd on the right, the other couple down the stairs on the left. Each carries a warming-pan drum and wears a yellow mask, yellow bodice and dark blue skirt, over which strips of tiger skin are arranged. On the tops of their heads are triangular flags. Again the priest approaches the dough figure and distributes portions to the five devils as they kneel round the triangle ; he then removes the remnants of the effigy and also the square carpet. Now, from right and left corners respectively, again approach two groups of five figures, demoniacal ogres with yellow, blue, red, and black masks bearing skulls, and all with three eyes. The five previously in the arena disappear as these ten new figures

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rush into the centre, amid the beating of drums, whistling and yelling, whooping and running about, thus demonstrating their demoniacal glee at the destruction of the enemy. The ten now dance together, ranging themselves in opposing fives, beating their drums slowly and quietly, and executing a sort of "Sir Roger" again. The band now stops entirely, while one of the dancers beats on to the end, until they all go out. We, too, with weary eyes and confused brains, are glad to retreat to our quiet tents on the hillside, trusting that the morrow may bring some elucidation of the purpose and meaning of the strange things we have witnessed.

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CHAPTER XXV

Hemis Mystery Play—Second Day

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THE morning of the second day was very disappointing, for, after a message having come for us to assemble just before ten o'clock, we had to sit expectantly for nearly two hours, and then were only rewarded by seeing a dance similar to the first one of the previous day. Our anticipation had been raised in vain several times by the fanfare from the heralds on the roof, or an overture by the band, and once even to high pitch by the sudden hurling of a number of lay-folk out of the porch and down the steps as though to clear the road, when they almost fell over each other in precipitous retreat from unseen forces behind, so that alarm for small boys in the crush was mingled with the joy of certainty that something was coming at last, only to settle once more into aggrieved patience. However, at last the band burst into full music, and a procession really appeared, preceded by the bearer of the jewelled beer-pot, at the side of which walked a lama with a whip, then two swingers of censers, then the two heralds, who led in apparently the same performers as in the first item of the previous day with the difference that a burning brazier was carried round to purify the way for an additional lama. This priest bore a ceremonial vase, something like a small tea-pot, adorned unfortunately by little tawdry skirts, and containing peacock's feathers. He led the way across the arena to a second outlet on the right where the dancers threw away sacred herbs. After this the dancing became more animated, with shrill

13: Heber and Heber D-3 (1914-25) 1926 AJ4 W. Tibetans AJ4

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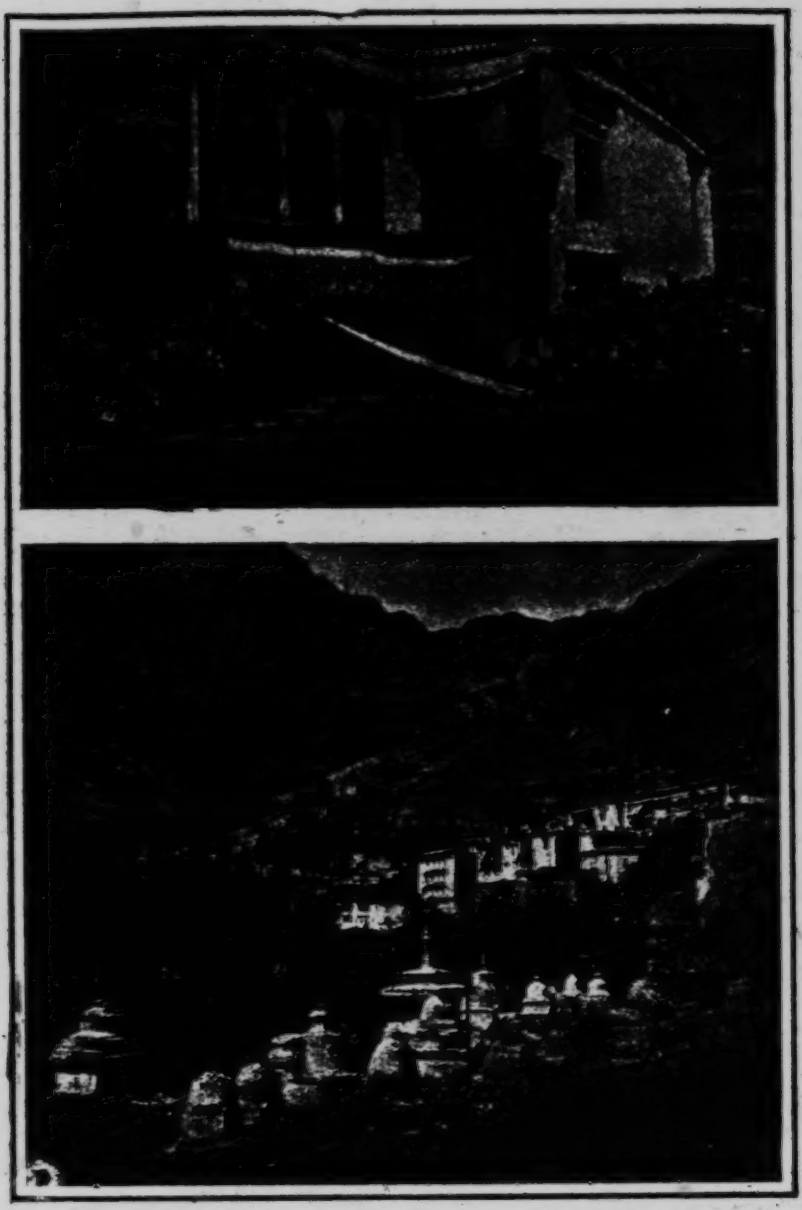

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THE FESTIVAL AT HEMIS.

Showing the lamas of the monastic band blowing their long *shawms*. To their left is the *Skashog's* throne, and to their right a large prayer-wheel framed in a projection of masonry.

HEMIS DGOMPA.

With *chortens* in the foreground. This is the monastery where the great festival is held annually. Hidden among the foothills, it has escaped pillage. Hence it is rich in treasure.

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796 whistling, the beating of the drums and chanting being
536 continuous throughout, while occasionally a clash of cymbals inaugurated an acceleration, when hops and jumps varied the monotony. When the performers had danced slowly round the circle, the trumpeters on the steps played them out as usual.

In the afternoon we again waited from 3 till 5 p.m. witnessing the preparations for a rather interesting display. Three sturdy little well fed ponies were brought into the court-yard. One was very gaily caparisoned, first with a rich fringed cloth covering his whole body, over which a beautiful carpet was thrown, above that a gorgeous saddle, and surmounting all a cloth of tiger-skin with a red edge. The other two ponies were given just one covering coat of patchwork with a border inferior in quality, the whole badly needing the attentions of needle and cotton. During the long waiting time which followed, a gentleman, who had evidently been enjoying the local beer, staggered about in and out between the ponies and round the area with smoking embers in a rough frying pan, saying "*so-lo, solo,*" (hurrah), and emitting weird noises which were apparently intended to raise the excitement of the animals, though this was achieved to a greater extent by the smoking embers being pushed in under their noses and close to their bodies. A figure dressed in Chinese hat, black coat, and yellow silk robe, holding a salutation-scarf, stood up by the flag-staff. He was extraordinarily motionless throughout the long time of waiting. A lama, with bare head and rich yellow silk robes, carrying a wand also appeared, he being the man in charge of these animals throughout the year. Each pony was held by a man wearing a hat with an edging of white goat or sheepskin. Underneath our balcony we next descried three black dogs, of which one seemed to drop out later, also with cloths on their backs, once gorgeous, now old, torn and faded, while to the right of the quadrangle two grey-white goats stood waiting.

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796 As they waited, a lama brought out some long strips of red
536 cloth printed with prayers, and climbing up the high flag-staffs, added them to the other prayer-flags for the wind to operate upon.

At last the ecclesiastical band appeared, on the roof this time, and the shawms and flageolets resounded ; then a lama brought out a silver tea-pot adorned with skirts and peacock feathers. He poured some of the contained beer into the hands of the patient Chinaman, on to the back of each of the animals, and some into the palms of each of their keepers, who drank it up with much relish. Then a battered old tin bowl containing blood-reddened clay was brought to each group of animals, and, their backs having been bared, they were well smeared with a bit of goat's hair dipped into the ruddy mixture. The ponies, now thoroughly excited, were led off at a gallop, and circling the monastery, were brought in at the opposite entrance, where cheered, hooted, and excited with much noise, they tore across the court-yard to re-appear and vanish again. The ponies thus circled the *d'Gonpa* altogether three times, the dogs only appearing once more, while the small timid goats were led slowly across once only, and then probably put aside for safety's sake. These animals represent the scapegoat idea as interpreted at Hemis, and once they have been chosen for this unusual ceremony are never allowed to work again, but fed and fattened at the expense of the monastery, and set aside for this ceremony until death. Some Ladaki informants also state that the ceremony is to dedicate the animals to the gods, the truth probably being that the gaily caparisoned one has some special purpose in this connection.

During this item a large pudding or cake made of some kind of flour mixed with water, the colour of mud and studded with white spots, was deposited on the ground in front of the empty *Skushog's* throne, and covered with a salutation scarf. This, according to a Ladaki onlooker, was to be dispensed

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subsequently by the Abbot with his blessing. It was removed at the end of the sccapegoat performance, after which three ragged and dirty women brushed over the dusty courtyard with little bundles of reeds and sprinkled it with water.

In the early morning a low square platform of mud, about four inches high, and two inches square, had been made in the same place as the triangle and square carpet had been laid the previous day. Now a tray was placed on the platform containing a rough cup and some tins. Then a dancer emerged, with a three-cornered pennant projecting from a large round hat, wearing a rich cape over a dress of brocaded streamers and scarves, and carrying a small bowl made of a human skull in his hand. He upset the tray, but apparently this was unintentional, and a small lama replaced its contents.

Ten more maskers emerged in single file, dressed like the first, but one unfortunately had broken the stick supporting his pennant, and the resulting angle made it rather interfering in the ensuing mêlée. The three-cornered flags were of red with broad blue borders, jester's bells were jingling round the waists, while numbers one and ten had anklets of bells also. Their masks, with faces of blue, green, red, flesh-colour, and yellow, were merely hideous and leering, having no third eye, so they probably belonged to the class of earth-master-demons. The first comer, their chief would then be the "Great Guardian King," who stands in the middle, while they stand in two rows facing him. As they dance to an impressive boom of the long shawms, an ordinary priest and small lama boy busy themselves preparing a device on the mud platform, using pencils and colours from the tray and tins already there. The lama first draws a large triangle of purple, then an inner one of yellow ochre next a white outline to a broad light blue one edged within again with white, and within this a solid black triangle is painted. Selecting white chalk, he then sketches in flames all round the purple outside triangle, hieroglyphics in the light blue one, and a central device in the black. What

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●536 these were we could not make out. Meanwhile the earth-master-demons have been trumpeted out in twos, and now two new heralds appear in the porch, young boys with white powdered faces, who, blowing the conches from the corners of their mouths, bend the knees outwards, as they finish each long note, as though to expel it more effectively. Their instruments have handsome long tassels, and are blown three times to usher in a long procession of dancers. Group one are unmasked, but dressed like the members of the inaugural dance on the previous day. Next to them the herald boys with their powdered faces take their place, and we note their green shorts of brocaded silk under a long scarf wound about their bodies, and looped up and down to form a skirt. Their hats are like red tea-cosies with bands wound round the base. The third group consists of four members with hats of a papier maché type, like a *Skushog's* riding hat. (These hats and all the masks are made at monasteries, and consist of cotton material bound together by a mixture of earth and water). Scarves hang down from under the hats behind, and their dresses are of yellow silk divided into large squares by broad bands of red, while in the right hand they carry long iron sticks with four projecting pieces at the top, bent down and hooked to receive four rings ; in their left hands are large black bowls. Another group of four follows, wearing black masks, all of whom have a terribly evil leer with mouth drawn down at the corners, as though saying a perpetual " ugh." The first and third, dressed in black, carry in the right hand a knifeboard and in the left what might be either a loop of intestine or merely a snare of rope. Numbers two and four hold in their right hands a flat object about two feet long cut in the shape of a human figure. Their raiment is fashioned of stuff resembling a leopard's skin, with a sleeveless bodice and a skirt cut into strips worn over navy shorts. The fifth and final group comprises four men, with the vizor masks we have already seen. In their hands they carry sword and shield,

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and to each of their backs is attached a quiver of arrows. 796
Beneath the fine silk, sleeveless overdresses of these warriors, 536
with streamers attached to the waistline, the warm homespun robes of the lama can be seen. The heralds, and, of course the gruesome quartette, are barefooted, but the rest wear ordinary lama boots. Each group in succession dances round the central mystic sign, sitting, when not their turn, on the carpetted benches in the corner of the quadrangle, which had been prepared as on the previous day.

The red square with its central tiger-skin was now produced again and laid down beside the painted triangles, on which another human effigy of dough under its blue veil was placed.

Now, preceded by heralds and swingers of censers, four figures dressed as in the first dance of the first day appear, each carrying a bell and *dorjhe*, accompanied by two lamas in their ordinary robes, one carrying the brazen chalice we have already seen, the other four cups on a tray. These two lamas pass to each dancer in turn, pouring into his cup a little beer, and adding a few grains of barley, while all chant in tone, and the band plays slow solemn music. This was, perhaps, the most impressive and stately act of the whole play. While the beer and barley were being actually served, the four performers were stationary, while the orchestra played and chanted a really beautiful theme, at the end of which the cups were emptied on the ground, the four figures bowed before the platform, themselves chanting, then, ringing their bells and holding out their *dorjhes*, again started their stately gyrations. This ceremony of filling and emptying the cups was performed six times; then the vessels were collected on a tray and removed.

With a whistle and flinging out of the dancers' scarves in time with the music, one of these priestly saints now takes his place on the square mat, the covering is removed from the effigy, and more incantations are intoned. Accompanied by

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more whistling and flinging of scarves and a wild reverberating crash of music from the band, the priest then leaves the square mat, and all join in a final dance, retreating in pairs.

The next act seems to begin within the monastery hall, for figures appear in the porch dancing to music, but retreat into the shadows again. One lama with censers, and one with the jewelled beer-jug come down into the quadrangle, and take up their positions by the right-hand flag-post. Again a figure with horns is seen gyrating within the porch, and anticipation is enhanced by the band bursting into wild crescendos. At last the procession emerges into view, first the bearer of the jewelled beer-jug, then two swingers of censers, then the heralds followed by a troop of three-eyed demon kings. The leader is he of the horned mask, bearing a sabre and a cup made of a human skull decked with streamers. All the rest have skulls on their head-dresses, rich embroidered silk robes with capes, aprons and streamers, capped by masks of green, red, yellow, white and brown. The horned gentleman is their *sLobdpon* or chief. He approaches the effigy and sprinkles it with barley from the plate which has been left at the side ; then a lama steps in and cuts the effigy up, giving each demon deity a portion. No doubt this ceremony is rooted in the old cannibalism of the *Bon Chos*. The effigy has now been killed, and four grave-yard ghouls come in to dispose of the corpse, though it is the lama who actually removes the last bits. The four dance about, two of them standing over the platform, and with alternate bare feet rhythmically wipe away, or rather smear out in its dust, all traces of the mystic triangles. They then dance altogether in ghoulish glee, while the horned gentleman, proceeding in solitary dignity, leads off his troupe in twos. The skeletal ones dance on, getting more joyful, jumping round and round themselves, and leaping to and from the empty platform until their turn also comes to depart.

It would leave a more profound impression if the play ended here, but a final foolish little act is introduced, serving as a

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complete anticlimax. A stool is placed near the *Skushogs'* throne, and the square carpet with the central tiger-skin, placed on it. An aged gentleman, with the large mask of an ordinary old man, but evidently very decrepit and tottery, is supported by five young boys with bare legs, short skirts, capes, and simple masks, with a bit of gay Yarkandi silk attached at the back to hide the hiatus between head and neck. A Ladaki onlooker says this gentleman is the one who attends to the feeding of all the masked lamas, and is called "rGyalpo (King) Achan." Supporting his failing steps, he leans heavily on his pupils, who eventually get him to the stool, accompanied by a masked and yellow-robed lama, carrying a warming-pan drum and a pair of cymbals, who squats on the ground at his side. One of the guardians with the moveable jaw, who watched over the row of benevolent deities on the first morning, enters with a brazier and rosary, and tries to help keep the high-spirited pupils in order. These jump about, laughing, boxing each other, fighting and playing, and making fun of their old preceptor. The old man gives them each some food, a piece of pudding made of uncooked barley mixed with water. He also offers them a piece of paper, and, as each in turn jumps to clutch it he whips them, to the great amusement of the crowd in the audience. On being handed the musical instruments he stands the warming-pan drum up on its handle, leaning it against his left knee, and, with his right hand, somehow manages both to beat it and to clash the cymbals on his right knee. To this music the small boys dance lightly and lithely round the flag-staff, receiving occasional whips from the guardian. They then jump about with whoops and cries, and carry on tedious little feeble bits of buffoonery, till even the audience gets weary and begins to disperse. The old man and his pupils in a close row prostrate themselves several times at full length before the *Skushog's* empty throne, obviously caricaturing this act of worship, then the boys stroke their aged teacher's head, tie a scarf round his

13: Heber and Heber D-3 (1914-25) 1926 AJ4 W. Tibetans AJ4

neck, and lead him away. By this time the crowds are all straggling across the court-yard, and the exit takes place in oblivion, giving a most absurd and feeble finish to the long performance.

Thinking over the mystery play in quiet retrospect, trying to discover a sequence and a meaning in its confused medley of sights and sounds, one has to confess that at the end a "mystery" play it remains. The *Skushog* himself has confirmed the idea that the effigy of dough represents a *chos-la gnodpa gtong-kan*, that is, a doer of harm to religion.

Even the common people have some idea of this, for on questioning an ordinary Ladaki as to its significance, he told me that it was an evil spirit that had been made to flee, but had come down from the hills to harm religion again. But, as Waddell says, "it is used also to convey to the people a vivid conception of the manner in which devils attack a corpse, and the necessity for priestly services of a quasi-Buddhist sort to guard it and the soul."

The constant apposition of incongruities is particularly fitting to this land for ever exhibiting things "the wrong way round." Even Alice's "curiouser and curiouser" is far transcended by the grotesque weirdness of religious conception here manifested. The rich embroidered silks, the dirty tags of commonest bazar cloth (probably a rag blessed by the *Skushog*) appended to the same person, the voluminous skirts and stately movements of cumbrous-large-booted personages, the difficulty of description that involves the introduction of a homely English object, such as a coffee-pot or even a knife-cleaning board, the mixture of rare costliness with tawdry banality, the introduction of mischievous imps and jesters into solemn scenes, the caricaturing of religion by its own devotees, the simultaneous inspiration of laughter and fear, all contribute to the general impression of a land of dreams and unreality. In the most solemn scene, where the four priests were receiving holy grain and wine with which te